



## Introduction

On 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group (CPG) on International Development held a virtual meeting on **Scotland's Global Leadership on Water**. This meeting was attended by the Minister for International Development, Jenny Gilruth MSP, MSP members of the CPG, and 35 external stakeholders.

The CPG invited international experts to share inputs on the importance of water to the fight against COVID-19, poverty and climate change, and made recommendations for how Scotland can show further global leadership in this area. The meeting took place in the context of the Scottish Government's International Development Review.

## Presenters

**Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Europe and International Development:** The Minister shared with the group an update on the ongoing international development review, highlighting that this review will aim to enhance Scotland's international development programme in light of COVID-19, future crises and efforts to subvert the "white gaze" in international development.

**Dorcas Pratt, Deputy Director, Water Witness:** Dorcas demonstrated how lack of access to the right to water intersects with community vulnerability to COVID-19, poverty and climate change, and outlined recommendations to the Scottish Government to show further leadership in this area.

**Ephraim Tsegay, Country Director, Tearfund Ethiopia:** Ephraim explained how cycles of floods and drought, exacerbated by climate change, impact upon the Afar region of Ethiopia, and explained some of the practical things that Tearfund are doing to support communities to adapt to the climate crisis.

**Maurice Kwizera, Country Director, WaterAid Rwanda:** Maurice shared information on the work that WaterAid Rwanda implements with support from Scottish Government and Scottish Water, and highlights the importance of providing access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in protecting communities from threats such as COVID & climate change.

## Recommendations

On the basis of these contributions and informed by the subsequent discussion, members of the CPG therefore make the following recommendations:

### **More and Better Aid:**

- ✓ Significantly increase portfolio of projects supporting water security and access to WASH, including through capacity building, funding and cross-sector partnerships.
- ✓ Ensure committed £2m spend for COVID is invested in the most effective solutions to COVID-19, and long-term solutions to community resilience
- ✓ Significantly increase Scotland's Climate Justice Fund
- ✓ Ensure that 'better aid' is delivered - with greater coherence between Directorates and Ministerial portfolios; with sufficient time to build the trust and relationships grounding strong partnerships, responsive to changing circumstances and aligned with good practice globally.

### **Beyond Aid:**

- ✓ Develop "Scotland's Water Footprint" to calculate the impact of our water footprint - through water embedded in clothes, food and commodities produced elsewhere - on the water security of the other people on the planet.
- ✓ Commit to new action on importers of embedded water to ensure credible water stewardship in supply chains
- ✓ Stand up as a leader in ethical finance, promoting a better financial system that delivers inclusive economic growth without depleting natural resources or leaving anyone behind

### **Climate Leadership:**

- ✓ Champion priority issues of Global South at COP26, especially finance for adaptation and loss and damage
- ✓ Convene pre-COP "Glasgow Dialogues" with key global south representatives in advance of COP26, including thematic discussions on water and other priority areas.

## What the experts said

### **Dorcas Pratt, Deputy Director, Water Witness**

How can we meet commitments to address coronavirus, climate and poverty without talking about water?

- 🌍 Water is a fundamental human right.
- 🌍 The provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19.
- 🌍 The most severe impacts of climate change felt around the world are water related. Typically, 170 million people are severely affected by droughts and floods each year.
- 🌍 78% of jobs globally are water dependent. 42% of these are heavily water-dependent
- 🌍 When water problems occur, it is consistently poor and marginalised people and particularly women who lose out first and most dramatically – and often irreversibly.

Water security is central to so many of our partner-country's own prioritised needs and essential to realising their national and local plans. Working to become the first Hydro Nation, Scotland has an important leadership role to play in sharing the value of Scotland's water resources globally. Explicit in this role is working with others in the face of the challenges ahead, to "leave no one behind" in line with the ethos of the UN SDGs. The voices of those who are vulnerable and marginalised in society must be heard. For example, citizens in vulnerable communities without access to the safe water they need are supported by Water Witness to activate their rights, raise their voices, demand accountability and advocate constructively to unlock sustainable water security. Under Hydro Nation, Water Witness recently joined forces with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), the James Hutton Institute and Baseflow, to work with the Malawian Government on sector governance – each partner bringing their particular strengths to the table - to help achieve Malawi's plans to meet SDG6. Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of this project, maximising the offer of Scotland to address priorities - as identified by Malawi.

We need to work together both learning from the knowledge, skills and technical expertise in our partner countries and sharing ours. This includes looking together at policy, systems and governance to see why water insecurity and injustices persist. Scotland is well positioned to play a leadership role in water, and in many respects, it is already doing that. As we stand in the face of the climate crisis and the global pandemic, there are great opportunities to draw our efforts together, do more and to do better. The Scottish Government has the opportunity to show greater leadership, enhancing its role through more and better aid, beyond aid and in climate leadership.

### **Ephraim Tsegay, Country Director, Tearfund Ethiopia**

Water is Life, but water insecurity makes the most vulnerable even more vulnerable. Often women and young girls are responsible for the collection of water and when local water sources dry up due to climate change, they are having to walk 15-20km each day to collect water in jerry cans and bring them back to their families. This significantly affects the schooling of younger girls and leaves all the girls and women vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, having local access to potable water is so important.

The issue of climate-change water insecurity also compounds other issues. In Ethiopia this year, not only have there been climate-change induced droughts and floods, but also a plague of locusts and COVID-19 - all of which affect the most vulnerable.

### **Maurice Kwizera, Country Director, WaterAid Rwanda**

Rwanda is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; specifically, floods, landslides and droughts. The increased frequency and intensity of these extreme events have a devastating impact of water infrastructure, diminishing water quality and causing fluctuation of groundwater levels. Climate change is water crisis, and in such hostile climate conditions, rural poor households are most affected. We work with poor communities daily and we know that because of their geographical location, their reliance on climate-vulnerable resources and infrastructure, like water, they are feeling climate effects first and most severely, despite having done least to cause climate change. And again, most at risk categories of the population include women, girls, elderly and people living with disabilities. Access to water changes tremendously power dynamics: the flow of capital to clean water would mean flow of power to women, girls and persons with disabilities.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) should be considered an integral part of climate action. The Scottish Government is already implementing effective projects which help build WASH access and therefore improve climate resilience, such as funding to WaterAid Rwanda via its Rwanda Development Programme.

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However, globally, there is not enough support for WASH initiatives, and especially too little climate finance addresses water access. To address this, WaterAid has launched a “Water and Climate Campaign” in March 2020. We are working closely across our global networks to push for action at COP26 on climate adaptation, and specifically for WASH to be recognized as a vital component of building resilience communities. We would welcome partnership with Scottish Government on these efforts.

## About Scotland’s International Development Alliance

The Alliance is the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. Our membership brings together a diverse range of organisations and individuals including over 200 international NGOs, faith-based organisations, companies, universities, charitable trusts and individuals that operate in over 100 countries.

We also act as secretariat for the Cross Party Group on International Development at the Scottish Parliament.

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